



Icons of Power: Feline Symbolism in the Americas

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Icons of Power investigates why the image of the cat has been such a potent symbol in the art, religion and mythology of indigenous American cultures for three thousand years.

The jaguar and the puma epitomize ideas of sacrifice, cannibalism, war, and status in a startling array of graphic and enduring images. Natural and supernatural felines inhabit a shape-shifting world of sorcery and spiritual power, revealing the shamanic nature of Amerindian world views. This pioneering collection offers a unique pan-American assessment of the feline icon through the diversity of cultural interpretations, but also striking parallels in its associations with hunters, warriors, kingship, fertility, and the sacred nature of political power. Evidence is drawn from the pre-Columbian Aztec and Maya of Mexico, Peruvian, and Panamanian civilizations, through recent pueblo and Iroquois cultures of North America, to current Amazonian and Andean societies.

This well-illustrated volume is essential reading for all who are interested in the symbolic construction of animal icons, their variable meanings, and their place in a natural world conceived through the lens of culture. The cross-disciplinary approach embraces archaeology, anthropology, and art history.

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